



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

Monday, May 20, 2002

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2002 Emergency Medical Services Week – Help is a Heartbeat Away

(Provo, UT) – The events of September 11 brought the courageous efforts of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel into the public eye and increased awareness of and appreciate for what they bring to their communities every hour of every day. The tragic events of September 11 will be relived for many as Utahns join the rest of the nation in this year's National EMS week activities.

This year's EMS Week theme, "Help is a Heartbeat Away," emphasizes the responsiveness, vigilance, and compassion of our EMS personnel, whose intervention saves countless lives. "It is important to recognize our EMS providers – every day heroes who have always been, and will continue to be there when we need them," says Jan Buttrey, EMS Bureau Director, Utah Department of Health. "National EMS Week is an opportunity for the public to learn about injury prevention, safety awareness, and emergency preparedness. State and local activities honoring EMS providers and educating the public will be held throughout the State."

A prime example of these heroes include members of Salt Lake Urban Search and Rescue who were deployed September 19, 2001 to respond to the World Trade Center in New York City. The Team consists of EMTs, Paramedics, civilian search specialists, canines, structural engineers, communications specialists, Emergency Physicians, and Nurses. They are proud to serve with determination and dedication.

This year's EMS week in Utah was kicked off by a special awards ceremony honoring and commemorating the dedicated medical professionals who demonstrate commitment and professionalism in delivering lifesaving emergency care. Awards were presented to many individuals and EMS teams who distinguished themselves through their dedicated service and heroic efforts. Some of the awards that were presented included:

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- **Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) of the Year – Launa Nielson, Wasatch County Ambulance**

Launa was recognized for her dedicated service in volunteering over 1700 hours in training others and preparing for the 2002 Winter Olympics. She was instrumental in getting Wasatch County Ambulance licensed as an Intermediate Agency, arranging instruction for EMT regarding hazardous materials, weapons of mass destruction, and fire fighting. She is qualified to teach EMT, advanced pediatric life support (PALS), and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)

- **Paramedic of the Year – Michelle Johnson, Davis County Sheriff's Office**

Michelle is a talented paramedic who has responded to many calls for help. She was recognized in particular for helping save the life of a 50-year-old heart attack victim and a 2-year-old who swallowed a marble. Attempts by EMTs to dislodge the marble using the Heimlich maneuver were unsuccessful. While en-route to the hospital, in the back of an ambulance, Michelle extracted the marble from the boy's airway with a laryngoscope blade and a pair of forceps. The boy was transported to Primary Children's Hospital where he fully recovered.

- **Emergency Medical Technician Instructor of the Year – Sharon Walters, Daggett County**

Sharon has been an EMT for over 18 years. She is also a County Commissioner. It's not easy to get residents to accept the challenge to become an EMT because the compensation is small and the time demands are great. Yet, Sharon is dedicated to teaching EMTs and very good at it. She is a caring mentor to new EMTs. She always finds ways to boost morale and makes learning fun by conducting classes outside, serving hamburgers, fries, and soft drinks. Sharon's tremendous skills and dedication are but a few of the characteristics that set her apart.

- **Emergency Nurse of the Year – Amy Skjonsbert, RN**

Amy teaches pediatric resuscitation to family practitioners, EMS providers, and the Utah Highway Patrol. She has treated numerous critical, unstable patients in harsh and rural areas. She has collaborated with medical directors in formulating the transport protocols and standards for Life Flight.

Awards were also be presented to a group of individuals for outstanding performance in a specific incident by dispatchers, EMTs, paramedics and for Emergency Team Incident.

For more information about injury prevention, safety awareness, and emergency preparedness, please call 1-800-284-1131. EMS Week is presented by the Bureau of Emergency Medical Services, Utah Department of Health, in cooperation with Utah Valley Regional Medical Center in Provo.

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